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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001625

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: JAPAN'S DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE TO CHINA

REF: TOKYO 01477

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Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Summary: Japan is continuing efforts to provide disaster relief assistance to China following the earthquake in Sichuan Province in an effort to improve ties with Beijing. Japan has provided one billion yen in aid and disaster relief supplies in addition to the three emergency and medical teams dispatched to China in May. MOFA contacts told Embassy Tokyo they were pleased with the efforts of the disaster and medical relief teams and considered the missions a success. Japan transported multiple shipments of emergency supplies to China in June. In one of the few downsides to Japan's aid efforts, miscommunication and a fumbled reporting cable from Japan's Embassy in Beijing led to the premature, and inaccurate, announcement of a PRC request for Japanese C-130 support. End Summary.

Japan's Disaster Relief Assistance

¶2. (SBU) Within hours of the Sichuan earthquake, Japan announced on May 13 it would provide 500 million yen (\$5 million) in disaster relief assistance. The 500 million yen aid package included 60 million yen (\$600,000) in emergency supplies from a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) warehouse located in Singapore. Japan provided tents, blankets, plastic sheeting, sleeping mats, generators, water purification equipment, and water cans. It also disbursed 192.1 million yen (\$192,000) in emergency grant aid to be distributed through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. On May 30, Japan announced it would provide an additional 500 million yen (\$5 million) in disaster aid. This included approximately 1,200 tents provided by local governments, the Japan Self-Defense Force, and the Cabinet Secretariat's International Peace and Cooperation Headquarters office.

¶3. (C) In addition to providing one billion yen in relief assistance, Japan dispatched two emergency response teams and one medical team to assist in recovery efforts. The two emergency response teams, totaling 61 people, departed on May 15 and 16. They stayed in China one week to assist in search-and-rescue efforts. Even though the emergency response teams did not locate survivors, MOFA China and Mongolia Division Principal Deputy Director Kazuya Endo told Embassy Tokyo that Japan considered their trip to be a success. In contrast, the returning emergency team members

lamented to the press that they arrived too late and were unable to do much good.

¶4. (C) Japan dispatched a 23-member medical team on May 20 to provide assistance for two weeks. Members of the medical team expected to provide medical care directly to earthquake victims in the field and were surprised to instead find themselves posted at a hospital assisting Chinese doctors, Endo stated. Nevertheless, the medical team provided an important service since the need for health care was so high, and the Japanese Government considers the medical team's mission to be a success, Endo emphasized.

Fumbled Reporting Cable Responsible for China C-130 Mix-Up

¶5. (S) A series of miscommunications led to the premature, and inaccurate, announcement of a PRC request for Japanese C-130 support for the Sichuan earthquake, according to MOD Operations Division Director Tatsumi. He related that the Japanese DATT in Beijing, upon learning from a PLA contact that China would be approaching Japan for SDF supplies, asked if Japan could deliver the supplies via milair, to which the PLA contact reportedly responded "why not?" The DATT's reporting cable went directly to Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura and formed the basis for the initial government line that Japan would use SDF planes to transport aid supplies. However, China never formally asked for milair support, nor was the Japanese DATT's PLA contact authorized to convey such a request, Tatsumi acknowledged. Tatsumi blamed the misunderstanding on new procedures to speed delivery of reporting to the Prime Minister's Office that were put in place following the collision of a Japanese destroyer and a fishing boat. In order to avoid accusations

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of withholding information, MOD now forwards all time-sensitive reporting to the PM's Office without vetting, Tatsumi explained. He added that Japan will continue to suggest publicly that it was Chinese internal divisions, rather than Japanese bureaucratic fumbling, that was to blame for the ultimate decision to use chartered aircraft rather than SDF assets.

¶6. (SBU) On June 2, Japan shipped 400 tents, supplied by two prefectural governments, aboard a chartered aircraft and on June 4 transported an additional 800 tents provided by the Ministry of Defense and the Cabinet Secretariat's International Peace and Cooperation Headquarters. On June 8, a 15-member Diet delegation, including senior Liberal Democratic Party of Japan Diet members Toshihiro Nikai and Tsutomu Takebe, accompanied an additional disaster relief supply shipment to Chengdu. Another batch of relief supplies was shipped to China on June 11, MOFA announced.
SCHIEFFER